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## HEALTH DEPARTMENT PROVIDES INFORMATION ON CDC SAMPLES RELATED TO HEPATITIS A OUTBREAK

*Findings show multiple introductions of the virus into the community  
Surveillance in the county continues*



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**Martin County, FL** – With support from local, regional and state personnel, the Florida Department of Health in Martin County has concluded its investigation into the 19 confirmed cases of hepatitis A in the community ranging from April 1-19. The Florida Department of Health has received genetic test results from CDC regarding the cases of hepatitis A in Martin County. Findings indicate that there were multiple introductions of the virus into the community, with no common link, which are consistent with the person-to-person spread seen in outbreaks nationwide. The genetic testing showed a close linkage between the virus circulating in Martin county and outbreak related cases in 17 other states.

“Hepatitis A cases are on the rise nationally and as the third largest state in the nation, and as a major tourist destination, we must remain vigilant here in Florida,” said **Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez**. “Good handwashing and vaccination are the most effective ways to stop the spread of Hepatitis A. We will continue to monitor the situation locally and educate residents about this preventable disease.”

“As we conclude our investigation into the recent Martin county hepatitis A cases, we are dedicating resources to continued surveillance and investigation of hepatitis A and all reportable diseases,” said **Dr. Carina Blackmore, Florida State Epidemiologist**. “The Department remains committed to the community and its stated mission to protect the health of residents and visitors alike.”

“We are so grateful for the support of our local and state partners as we worked extensively to investigate each of these cases and share hepatitis A prevention information with the public,” said **Carolann Wegener-Vitani, Interim Health Officer for the Florida Department of Health in Martin County**. “Our team spent hundreds of hours reviewing lab reports and conducting interviews with confirmed cases and their contacts to learn about their lifestyles including where they traveled and what restaurants they dined at to look for connections that could pinpoint a common link.”

The Florida Department of Health worked closely with the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR), which regulates restaurants, to ensure that food service managers and staff had fact sheets and resources to protect the health of customers. Health Department staff also offered a series of walk-in clinics to ensure access to the hepatitis A vaccine and worked with community partners and agencies to keep the public informed.

The Department of Health in Martin County is grateful for the support of and partnership with the Martin County Sheriff's Office in making sure the community is protected from future outbreaks through initiatives such as coordinating hepatitis A vaccination for inmates at the jail, a population considered at-risk for the virus.

Local and state officials, such as Martin County Board of Commissioners Chair Ed Ciampi, have been and continue to be vital partners in ensuring public health is protected, and providing any and all resources needed in both the investigation and the dissemination of information to the public.

The Health Department has confirmed 22 cases of hepatitis A in Martin County and 3 deaths associated with complications from the virus.

**Surveillance Continues:**

FDOH-Martin staff will continue routine surveillance for hepatitis A cases and all reportable diseases, with additional support from an FDOH-St Lucie Epidemiologist.

**Prevention & Vaccination Efforts:**

Good handwashing and vaccination are vital to stopping the spread of hepatitis A in the community. Since April 2019, FDOH Martin staff provided approximately 2,000 hepatitis A vaccinations to uninsured, underinsured and at-risk adults through a series of walk-in clinics and community outreach events.

The hepatitis A vaccine is available in the community via health care providers and local pharmacies. FDOH-Martin is providing the hepatitis A vaccinations, by appointment for uninsured, underinsured and at-risk adults (ages 19 and older). Appointments are available by calling: 772-221-4000 and pressing option 4 for Clinic Services/Appointments.

**General Information:**

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable liver disease. While normally not fatal, persons with chronic disease, compromised immune systems and the elderly are more likely to experience a severe illness, leading to liver failure and possible death.

Anyone experiencing symptoms of hepatitis A, including fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, diarrhea, clay colored bowel movements, joint pain and jaundice (yellow skin/eyes) should contact their healthcare provider immediately for evaluation and testing.

Since January 2018 there have been 2,014 confirmed cases of Hepatitis A statewide. The Florida Department of Health considers a community "impacted" when the confirmed number of cases reaches five. Martin County became an impacted county on Monday, April 1.

**Additional Resources:**

The Florida Department of Health has launched an information line, email box and a website to address general questions about Hepatitis A.

- **Hepatitis A, Information Line:**  
1-844-CALL-DOH (1-844-225-5364) available Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
- **Website:** [www.Floridahealth.gov/hepa](http://www.Floridahealth.gov/hepa)
- **Email questions:** [HepA@flhealth.gov](mailto:HepA@flhealth.gov)

**About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at [@GoHealthyMartin](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit [www.MartinCountyHealth.com](http://www.MartinCountyHealth.com)

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